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Editorial

The scope and depth of research in wildlife parasitology have increased considerably over the past several decades. This growth has been driven by several factors, including the increasing recognition of parasites as components of many wildlife health problems, and the consequent need to determine the parasite fauna of wildlife species, and the actual and potential effects of the parasites on hosts at individual and population levels. Parasite-associated disease, or in some cases simply infection, are also important considerations in the conservation of wildlife, and their parasites and habitats. This applies to both free-ranging and captive wildlife fauna, particularly as the role of zoos in the conservation of endangered species increases. In addition, as some wildlife species, particularly fish and shellfish, are farmed on larger scales the problems of parasitism increase.

Wildlife are increasingly recognized as often critical players in the maintenance and transmission of a range of parasites that can influence human and domestic animal health and well-being. Conversely, some parasites of these hosts can infect and cause disease in wildlife. Further, many of these networks between and within the three host groups are changing, often as a direct or indirect result of anthropogenic activities. At a more fundamental level, there is an accelerating realization that parasites in wildlife offer opportunities to explore many of the basic features of parasitism and host–parasite systems in a wide range of hosts in ecosystems often less altered by human intervention than those occupied by domestic animals. These explorations can result in a better understanding of parasitic infection and disease in domestic animals and people.

Overall the focus of much wildlife parasitology is shifting from reactive to proactive, and from a single host species or habitat to a more broadly based, multidisciplinary approach that examines the occurrence and role of parasites in total ecosystems, often using novel methods and techniques. This approach can lead to the detection and exploration of often un-anticipated linkages between components and events within an ecosystem that generate changes in parasite abundance and distribution. A key result of this shift is the recognition of many gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the structure and effects of the parasite faunas of many wildlife species, including those in danger of extinction or extirpation, those with critical roles in the maintenance of fragile ecosystems, and those important in the risk of disease for domestic animals and people.

This expansion, enrichment, and emergence of changing perceptions of wildlife parasitology highlighted the need for a journal to provide a dedicated focus for the rapid publication of research results, reviews, and opinions related to parasites and wildlife. In July, 2012, the Australian Society for Parasitology and Elsevier launched the *International Journal for Parasitology: Parasites and Wildlife* (*IJP:PAW*), the first journal dedicated to wildlife parasitology. Since the launch, articles have been published in *IJP:PAW* covering helminth, arthropod and protozoan parasites of more than thirty five species of mammal, bird, amphibian, fish, and arthropod, submitted by authors from fourteen countries in Australasia, Europe, and North and South America. This is a very encouraging start, during which we have received excellent support from our international panel of Associate Editors, from manuscript reviewers around the world, and from the Australian Society for Parasitology and Elsevier. For the future, we have more review articles on the way, we are working to increase the rapidity of publication, and we have assembled a panel of statisticians and epidemiologists to help with manuscript review. Our major aim for *IJP:PAW* is to be a home for first class science, and the first choice for researchers in wildlife parasitology around the world.

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